

## **The Order 10731**

Chapter: 10731

Chen Ping shook his head.

Jiang Xuelan turned around, her gaze passing over the lake's surface, looking towards the place deep within the lake where the enormous creature called "Gui Xu" slept.

"Because this is the oldest place in the Fourteenth Heaven. Older than the gods, older than the humans, older than any known race."

Her voice deepened, carrying the solemnity of recounting an ancient legend.

"The Tree of Life wasn't planted by our gods. When we discovered it, it was already here. And the reason it can grow here is because..."

She pointed to the bottom of the lake.

"Because of Gui Xu."

Chen Ping followed her gaze.

The lake water was a deep, dark blue, its depths unfathomable. The enormous creature had sunk to the very bottom, only a faint golden light flickering in the darkness.

"Gui Xu is more than just a fish," Jiang Xuelan said softly. "It is the guardian of this lake, the guardian of the Tree of Life, and even more so... the guardian of a door."

"What door?" Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan didn't answer immediately.

She remained silent for a long time, so long that Chen Ping thought she wouldn't answer, when she suddenly spoke.

"A door leading to... the ancient era."

Chen Ping's pupils contracted slightly.

"The roots of the Tree of Life extend to the deepest part of the lake. At the bottom of the lake, there is a crack guarded by Gui Xu. On the other side of that crack lies a world forgotten by time, the battlefield of ancient times."

Her voice carried a strange rhythm, as if chanting an ancient epic.

"The most powerful beings of ancient times are buried there. The ancestors of the gods, the progenitors of the demons, the emperors of the dragons... all left their legacies and relics on that battlefield."

She turned to Chen Ping, her gaze intense.

"I've always wanted to go down and see. But the Ruins of Return forbid anyone from approaching that rift. It has guarded it for countless years, forbidding anyone from stepping onto that ancient battlefield."

"But now it's different."

A slight smile played on her lips, a hint of cunning and anticipation in her expression.

"The Ruins of Return recognize my bloodline, and it recognizes your Golden Dragon bloodline. But it doesn't recognize... our bloodline."

Chen Ping was taken aback: "Our bloodline?"

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Jiang Xuelan stretched out her hand, palm up.

A pale golden light appeared in her palm—the light was neither pure gold nor pure ice blue, but a perfect fusion of the two colors.

It was the power of the fusion of the Ice God bloodline and the Golden Dragon bloodline.

This was also the power that Chen Ping and Jiang Xuelan shared after their dual cultivation.

“The Void won’t stop those who possess this power.”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice carried a hint of excitement, “Because this power shares the same origin as the power of certain beings in that ancient battlefield...”

Chen Ping finally understood her meaning.

“You want me to go down with you?”

Jiang Xuelan nodded.

“That’s the second thing.” She held up two fingers and waved them in front of Chen Ping, “Accompany me to explore the place guarded by the Void.”

Chen Ping was silent for a moment, then slowly nodded.

“Okay.”

Jiang Xuelan smiled.

The smile was faint, yet more genuine than ever before.

No longer a cold, aloof, distant smile, but a woman's heartfelt smile after receiving a promise.

"Tomorrow." She turned around, her gaze fixed on the enormous, slumbering creature deep within the lake, "Tomorrow we'll go down."

Deep in the lake, the Void's golden eyes slowly opened a crack in the darkness. The gaze pierced the inky blue lake, landing on the two people standing side-by-side beneath the Tree of Life.

It lingered on them for a long time.

Then, the golden eyes slowly closed, sinking back into darkness.

As if in acquiescence.

As if waiting.

The next morning, before dawn.

Chen Ping stood by the lake, watching the inky blue water ripple gently in the morning breeze.

The aurora borealis overhead had lost its deep blue-purple of the night, returning to its pale color, like an old silk that had been washed countless times, drifting silently in the sky.

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Jiang Xuelan stood beside him. Today she was dressed differently; no longer in a plain white dress, but in a form-fitting ice-blue water-colored gown, which accentuated her slender and graceful figure.

Her long hair was tied up high, secured with a white jade hairpin, revealing her fair neck and well-defined collarbones.

In her hand, she held a fist-sized bead, emitting a faint blue light. The light wasn't dazzling, but it possessed a penetrating quality, as if it could see into the deepest ocean depths.

"This is a water-repelling bead."

She handed the bead to Chen Ping. "Hold it in your mouth, and you can breathe freely underwater. The Lake of Returning Ruins is unfathomably deep; the deeper you go, the greater the water pressure becomes. An ordinary cultivator's protective true qi won't last long."

"I don't need this. I can freely enter and exit the vast ocean..." Chen Ping felt he had no need for the water-repelling bead.

He had even been in the sea; what was a small lake to him?

"The ocean you entered was just an ordinary ocean, while this is the Lake of Returning Ruins, incomparable to an ordinary ocean. If you insist on showing off and refuse, then I can refuse to give it to you." Jiang Xuelan made a move to put the water-repelling bead away.

"Since that's the case, I'll still take it."

Chen Ping snatched the Water-Repelling Pearl.

The pearl was icy cold to the touch, its surface smooth as a mirror.

He did as instructed and put the pearl in his mouth. A cool sensation immediately flowed from the pearl, down his throat, and into his lungs, making him feel refreshed.

"Follow me closely," Jiang Xuelan said, then leaped into the lake.

Her entry into the water was as graceful as a waterbird returning to its nest, without creating a splash, she silently disappeared into the dark blue lake.

Chen Ping took a deep breath and followed suit.

The moment he entered the water, the Water-Repelling Pearl's power took effect.

A thin layer of blue light covered his body, isolating him from the lake water.

That light membrane was like an invisible armor, completely neutralizing all pressure.

The lake water was much colder than he had expected.

Even with the protection of the water-repelling pearl, he could still feel the bone-chilling cold.

The cold wasn't just ordinary low water temperature; it was an ancient, icy chill, as if the lake had never been warm since the beginning of time.

Feeling the biting cold, Chen Ping felt somewhat relieved that he had used the water-repelling pearl.

Not far ahead of him, Jiang Xuelan's icy blue water almost blended into the surface, with only the white jade hairpin in her hair emitting a faint glow in the darkness, like a guiding light.

The two of them, one after the other, dived deeper into the lake.

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At first, they could still see light; the aurora borealis and the golden light of the Tree of Life shone through the water, forming shimmering pillars of light in the lake, like holy light shining from a cathedral dome.

But as they went deeper, the light grew dimmer and weaker.

Finally, only pure darkness remained, so dark that they couldn't even see their own hand in front of their face.

Chen Ping could only rely on the light from Jiang Xuelan's white jade hairpin to orient himself.

The surrounding lake water began to change.

It was no longer ordinary lake water, but a much thicker, heavier liquid, as if swimming in ink.

The water-repelling pearl's membrane hissed in this thick liquid, seemingly under immense pressure.

"We're almost at the territory of Guixu."

Jiang Xuelan's voice suddenly rang in Chen Ping's ears, clear as if speaking face-to-face.

She was transmitting her voice using divine sense.

As soon as she finished speaking, Chen Ping felt something move ahead.

It was an extremely faint vibration, emanating from the depths of the lake, passing through the thick water, and reaching his body.

The vibration was so slight, almost imperceptible, yet the power it contained made Chen Ping's heart leap.

It was a heartbeat.

An unimaginably enormous heart was beating slowly and powerfully deep within the lake.

Thump. \*Thump.\*

\*Thump.\*

Each thud caused the lake water to tremble slightly, each thud made Chen Ping's blood resonate.

"It's awake," Jiang Xuelan's voice held a hint of tension.

Two golden lights appeared in the darkness ahead.

The lights were initially small, like two distant stars.

But they grew larger and brighter, like two rising suns.

When the two lights were large enough to illuminate an area of several hundred feet around them, Chen Ping finally saw what they were.

Eyes.

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The eyes of Guixu.

Those golden eyes floated in the darkness, each tens of feet wide, larger than any building Chen Ping had ever seen.

The golden pupils held no emotion, only an indifference that transcended time, as if watching two ants that had strayed into the nest of a giant beast.

Behind those eyes was the outline of Guixu.

The outline was so enormous that Chen Ping's vision could not contain it. He could only see dark blue scales, each the size of a house, reflecting a cold, eerie luster in the golden light.

A dark red light flowed between the scales, like magma surging in cracks of rock.

The body of Guixu twisted and turned, extending into the deeper darkness of the lake, its end invisible.

"Don't be afraid," Jiang Xuelan's telepathic transmission sounded again, "It won't harm us. But it will...test us."

Test?

Before Chen Ping could react, one of Guixu's eyes shifted slightly, its golden gaze landing on him.

That gaze felt like a mountain pressing down, making Chen Ping feel his very soul tremble.

It wasn't oppression, but something more fundamental. Before that gaze, he felt all his secrets were laid bare, as if he had been seen through from the inside out.

Guixu's gaze lingered on him for three breaths.

Then, it looked away.

Those golden eyes slowly closed. Meanwhile, a deep rumble echoed from the depths of the lake, like the earth groaning.

The rumble grew louder and closer, causing the entire lake to tremble violently.

Chen Ping felt the lakebed beneath his feet cracking open.

A fissure extended from the slumbering void to both sides, widening and deepening with each passing moment.

Blinding white light surged from the fissure, a light unlike sunlight or the aurora, a more ancient and primal radiance, like the first rays of light at the beginning of time.

“Now!” Jiang Xuelan grabbed Chen Ping’s wrist, pulling him towards the fissure.

Like two arrows released from a bow, the two sped through the thick lake water towards the white light.

The fissure drew closer, the white light growing increasingly blinding.

Chen Ping could feel a power within that white light that made his blood boil.

That power resonated with the chaotic energy within him, causing every inch of his flesh and blood to rejoice and tremble.

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Then, they plunged into the white light.

The white light before them lasted for about three breaths, then abruptly vanished.

Chen Ping found himself standing on unfamiliar land.

The ground beneath his feet was a dark gray rock, as hard as refined steel, its surface riddled with countless cracks.

These cracks weren't naturally formed; they were the marks of something shattered and reformed by an incredibly terrifying force. He could sense a faint, ancient aura lingering within each crack, an aura so powerful it was chilling, so overwhelming it instilled despair.

He looked up, surveying his surroundings.

His breath caught in his throat.

This was a battlefield.

A vast battlefield stretching to the horizon.

Three moons hung in the sky: one blood-red, one pitch-black, and the third, half-shattered, a lonely crescent moon emitting a pale, deathly light.

The three colors of moonlight bathed the battlefield in an eerie, dark purple hue.

Countless enormous skeletons lay scattered across the ground.

Chen Ping had never seen such enormous creatures.

Some of the skeletons were hundreds of feet long, like the spines of mountain ranges;

Others soared into the clouds, like pillars supporting the sky.

Their owners must have possessed world-destroying power in life, but now, only cold white bones remained, silently recounting their former glory under the moonlight.

“These are...” Chen Ping’s voice was hoarse.

“The remains of ancient races.”

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him, her gaze sweeping over the massive skeletons, her voice filled with complex emotions, “The ancestors of the gods, the progenitors of the demons, the emperors of the dragons, and some races I don’t even recognize. They all perished here.”

She pointed to the tallest skeleton in the distance.

That skeleton stood upright on the ground, easily a thousand feet tall, and even as just a skeleton, it still exuded a suffocating pressure.

The shape of the skeleton vaguely resembled a human, with a pair of enormous bone wings on its back, hundreds of feet wide when spread out.

“That is my ancestor, the progenitor of the Ice God lineage. His name was Bei Mingyuan, the first being in the world to master the laws of ice. Legend says he could freeze time, seal space, and plunge the entire Chongtian into an eternal winter with a single thought.”

She pointed to another side.

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There lay an even larger skeleton, over a thousand feet long, shaped like a winding mountain range.

The skeleton’s head still had two enormous horns, and even after countless millennia of death, faint arcs of electricity still flickered on them.

“That is the Dragon Emperor, the Taixu Dragon Emperor. Legend says he was the ancestor of all dragons, and his bloodline later branched into major dragon races such as the Golden Dragon, Silver Dragon,

Black Dragon, and Red Dragon. His power was enough to tear apart the void; a single claw could shatter a star.”

Chen Ping stared blankly at the Dragon Emperor’s skeleton, the Golden Dragon bloodline within him suddenly beginning to boil uncontrollably.

It was a resonance from the depths of his blood; his blood told him that the skeleton before him was his ancestor.

It was the source of the dragon blood flowing within him.

He involuntarily took a step towards the skeleton.

“Chen Ping!” Jiang Xuelan grabbed him. “Don’t go near. The residual power on those skeletons is still enough to kill a True Immortal Realm cultivator. You don’t know what’s still alive inside.”

Chen Ping stopped, took a deep breath, and forcibly suppressed the boiling dragon blood within him.

She was right.

This place was too dangerous; he couldn’t act rashly.

He looked around, beginning to carefully observe the battlefield.

“Is this battlefield only accessible from this Ruins of Return?”

Chen Ping was extremely puzzled. Such a vast ancient battlefield—among the thirty-six heavens of the Celestial Realm, could only be entered through the Ruins of Return, the fourteenth heaven?

Jiang Xuelan looked at Chen Ping as if he were a fool.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Chen Ping asked, confused.

“This is an ancient battlefield. This area is outside the Heavenly Realm, unbound by its laws. How could it be that only those at the Fourteenth Heaven can enter?”

“There should be passages to this ancient battlefield in all thirty-six Heavens of the Heavenly Realm, but not all of these passages are known to anyone,” Jiang Xuelan explained to Chen Ping.

“So you mean, we might encounter cultivators from other Heavens here?”

Chen Ping was stunned!

Jiang Xuelan nodded: “Possibly...”

“Damn, if we encounter cultivators from the Thirty-Sixth Heaven, wouldn’t we be utterly useless?” Chen Ping was suddenly alarmed.

He was incredibly powerful, able to fight beyond his level, possessing the Golden Dragon bloodline and the power of chaos.

But if he really encountered a cultivator from the Thirty-Sixth Heaven, with his current strength, he’d probably be finished with a single breath.

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“So we need to explore this area as quickly as possible and then go back!” Jiang Xuelan said, and began to examine the battlefield.

Chen Ping looked around as well.

Besides the enormous skeletons, he saw countless broken weapons scattered on the ground.

There were broken longswords, shattered battle axes, dented shields, and other objects whose purpose he couldn't recognize.

He had never seen these weapons before in their materials. Some emitted a faint blue glow, some had a liquid metallic sheen, and some, even broken, still trembled slightly, as if yearning for battle.

"These weapons..." Chen Ping crouched down, wanting to pick up a broken blade.

"Don't touch them!" Jiang Xuelan stopped him again. "Those weapons are imbued with the resentment of those who died in ancient battles. If you touch them, that resentment will immediately corrode your soul, dragging you into an endless nightmare."

Chen Ping's hand froze in mid-air, then slowly withdrew.

He stood up and looked at Jiang Xuelan: "You've been here before?"

Jiang Xuelan shook her head: "No. But the records of this battlefield are in the annals of my divine palace. Those records were left by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage; they entered this place and left alive."

She paused, then took out a palm-sized jade slip from her bosom and gently stroked it.

The jade slip glowed faintly, projecting a map into the air.

It was an extremely complex map, marking the general terrain of the battlefield. In the center was a vast plain, surrounded by continuous mountain ranges, and in the very center of the battlefield was a striking red marker.

"Where is that?" Chen Ping asked.

"The deepest part of the battlefield."

Jiang Xuelan's voice deepened. "The records of our ancestors say that the most powerful being on this battlefield is buried there, an enemy that even the combined might of the divine ancestors and the dragon emperors could not defeat.

No one knows its identity, no one knows its origin, no one knows why it is here, or why it is an enemy of all the ancient races."

She put away the jade slip and looked at Chen Ping.

"I'm going there."

Chen Ping frowned. "Why? That place is too dangerous."

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, her gaze resolute. "Although the bloodline of the Ice God lineage has been strengthened through our dual cultivation, it is only temporary. If we don't find the true source, the Ice God bloodline will eventually decline again and ultimately perish completely."

She stretched out her hand, palm facing upward. A pale golden light appeared—the power of their fused bloodlines.

But at the edges of that light, a faint dimming had begun to appear.

"Look. The power of fusion is waning. Our dual cultivation can only maintain the activity of our bloodlines, but it cannot change the root cause of the Ice God's bloodline's decline. That root cause lies deep within this battlefield."

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Chen Ping fell silent.

He understood Jiang Xuelan's meaning.

She wasn't taking a risk; she was searching for a final way out for her race.

"Let's go," Chen Ping's voice was calm yet firm. "I'll go with you."

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, a complex emotion flashing in her deep eyes.

She didn't say thank you, only nodded slightly.

The two walked deeper into the battlefield.

After walking for about an hour, the surrounding environment began to change.

The skeletons on the ground became increasingly dense and enormous.

Some skeletons piled up together, forming small mountains of white bones.

A faint, putrid stench began to fill the air. It wasn't the smell of rotting flesh—after all, these skeletons had existed for countless millennia—but something more primal: the aura of death, the pervasive force of decay.

"Something's wrong," Jiang Xuelan suddenly stopped, her brow furrowed.

Chen Ping sensed it too.

It was too quiet.

Not just ordinary quiet, but a deathly stillness, a stillness that swallowed even sound itself.

Their footsteps, their breathing, even their heartbeats, vanished completely after a few steps, as if sucked away by something.

“Something’s watching us,” Chen Ping whispered.

His intuition was screaming a warning.

It was the feeling of being watched by a predator, like a wild beast lurking in the darkness, waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

Jiang Xuelan gripped the jade slip in her hand tightly, icy blue divine light swirling around her.

“Be careful...”

Before she could finish speaking, the ground beneath her feet suddenly trembled violently.

A deafening rumble...

Amidst the deafening roar, a skeleton not far away began to move.

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It was the skeleton of a dragon, smaller than the surrounding skeletons, but still over a hundred feet long.

It had previously lay still on the ground like a small mountain of bones, but now, its skeleton began to reassemble. Spine after spine joined together, ribs returned to their positions one by one, and the bones of its limbs snapped and clicked as they came together.

In just a few breaths, a complete skeletal dragon stood before the two.

Two eerie green flames burned in its eye sockets—the flames of death, a product of ancient resentment.

Its mouth slowly opened, emitting a silent roar. The roar was soundless, yet the shockwave distorted and warped the surrounding air, sending rubble flying everywhere.

“This is...” Chen Ping instinctively gripped the Dragon-Slaying Sword tighter.

“The resentment of ancient warriors who died in battle has attached itself to the skeletons.”

Jiang Xuelan’s voice was urgent yet calm. “They will attack any intruder. Don’t linger, come with me!”

She grabbed Chen Ping’s hand and rushed in another direction.

The bone dragon’s massive tail swept across, creating a gust of wind.

Each bone spike on the tail was several meters long, sharp enough to cut through gold and jade.

The two leaped into the air, barely dodging the sweep.

The bone tail grazed their feet, slamming into the ground with a deafening roar, creating a huge crater and sending debris flying.

Chen Ping landed and glanced back, his pupils suddenly contracting. It wasn’t just that one bone dragon.

More skeletons began to move.

The massive skeletons scattered on the ground rose one after another.

Among them were the skeletons of divine ancestors, their massive bone wings spreading wide, blotting out the sky;

the skeletons of demonic progenitors, with two horns on their heads and gleaming fangs in their mouths;

and other races Chen Ping couldn't recognize, some with three heads and six arms, some covered in bone spikes, some resembling mobile fortresses.

Dozens of enormous skeletons surrounded them from all directions, eerie green necromantic flames flickering in their eye sockets like dozens of ghostly lamps.

"Run!" Jiang Xuelan shouted, pulling Chen Ping along as they sprinted.

The two transformed into streaks of light, one golden and one blue, weaving through the gaps between the skeletons.

A skeleton of a divine ancestor extended a massive bone hand, reaching for them.

Each finger of that bone hand was several meters long, its tip sharp as a knife. Jiang Xuelan dodged to the side, then struck the bone hand's wrist with her own palm.